



Wisconsin Department of
Health and Family Services

Preventing the Spread of Influenza at Home How You Can Help

Influenza (the “flu”) is a viral illness that is spread from person to person when people cough or sneeze near each other. The best way to prevent serious illness from the flu is to get immunized. In the past, health officials encouraged all persons over the age of 6 months to receive the “flu shot.” Because there is currently a shortage of vaccine, only persons at high risk for complications of flu should be immunized. It is important to follow

the guidelines listed below to help protect you and others from getting the flu. For more information, visit the website of the Department of Health and Family Services at: <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/influenza>.

Immunization (Flu Shot)

All persons in the following categories should be immunized:

1. Adults aged 65 and over.
2. Children 6 to 23 months old.
3. Adults and children with chronic medical conditions.*
4. Women who are pregnant during the flu season (October – March).
5. Children age 6 months to 18 years on chronic aspirin therapy.
6. Healthcare workers involved in direct patient care.
7. Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months.

* People with chronic medical conditions include those who have required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization during the preceding year because of chronic metabolic diseases (including diabetes mellitus), renal dysfunction, hemoglobinopathies, or immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by human immunodeficiency virus [HIV]).

Coughing and Sneezing

Practice good health habits when coughing or sneezing by:

1. Covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
2. Discarding tissue in a waste container immediately after use.
3. Washing hands (as noted below) immediately after disposing of used tissue.

No one should share drinking cups, water bottles, eating utensils, or any other items placed in another person's mouth.

Washing Hands

To help protect against illnesses like the “flu,” everyone should wash their hands:

1. After coughing or sneezing or whenever fingers touch the inside of the mouth or nose.
2. Before preparing food.
3. Before and after eating.
4. After hands touch another person who has a cough or cold.
5. Whenever hands are not clean.

Hands should be washed with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds, with rubbing action, then rinsed, and dried with a paper towel. A clean paper towel should be used to turn off water faucets. The use of an alcohol gel (like Purell®) is a convenient and effective alternative to washing with soap and water. Use of an alcohol gel is encouraged for people who are in bed due to respiratory illnesses.

Keeping Sick Persons Away from Others

People with influenza symptoms (fever, chills, sore throat, cough, headache, muscle aches) should remain at home for 5 to 7 days after they first become ill. They should not go to work, school, day care, or any other public gatherings.

Visitors to households with ill persons should be limited.

Children under the age of 6 months should not come in contact with people who have symptoms.

During influenza season, newborns and young infants should be kept from crowded settings such as shopping malls, theaters, and other public gatherings.